DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 257 917 UD 024 277

TITLE Children, Families, and Public Schools: Building Community Alliances for Learning. The National Education Association's Annual Conference on Human and Civil Rights in Education (23rd, February 22-24, 1985). NEA Report.
INSTITUTION National Education Association, Washington, D.C.
PUB DATE Feb 85
NOTE 24p.
PUB TYPE Collected Works - Conference Proceedings (021)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Alienation; Child Abuse; Child Neglect; *Community Involvement; Community Role; *Disadvantaged Youth; Drinking; Drug Abuse; Early Childhood Education; Educational Needs; Elementary Secondary Education; Equal Education; Ethnicity; Federal Legislation; Hunger; Minority Group Children; Multicultural Education; Parent School Relationship; Pregnant Students; Racial Discrimination; Sex Discrimination; *Social Problems; *Student Needs; Suicide; *Teacher Responsibility; Technology; Track System (Education)
IDENTIFIERS *Educator Role; Latchkey Children

ABSTRACT

This conference addressed the problems of children whose circumstances limit their ability to learn, their access to equal educational opportunity, and their basic civil rights, and the role of National Education Association (NEA) members and their communities in solving these problems. The keynote address by Blandina Cardenas Ramirez, excerpted here, considered how education employees can address the needs of children whose education has been hampered by discrimination. Summaries of the following seminar sessions are provided: (1) the effects of hunger on children's learning; (2) child abuse and neglect; (3) overcoming racial, cultural, and economic alienation; (4) missing children, runaways, teenage suicides, and pregnant students; (5) children left alone: latchkey problems; (6) drug and alcohol abuse; (7) special needs of children; (8) overcoming the school obstacle course: testing, screening, and tracking; (9) maintaining cultural identity in school integration; (10) bringing families into the teaching-learning process; (11) reporting problems and identifying resources for assistance; (12) opening new technology to minorities and women; and (13) early childhood education: a path out of poverty. Excerpts from speeches on children's legislative issues (Marian Wright Edelman) and community and school responses (U.S. Representative George Miller) are given. Examples are provided of specific planning models for analyzing an issue and setting goals. The concluding speech by NEA Vice President Keith Geiger focuses on the need for school employees and communities to collaborate in improving the education of students with difficult circumstances. Lists of relevant resources and of panelists accompany each seminar summary. (RDN)

ED257917

nea REPORT

Children, Families, and Public Schools: Building Community Alliances for Learning

The National Education Association's Twenty-Third Annual Conference on Human and Civil Rights in Education

February 22-24, 1985

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

✓ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official NIE position or policy.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

G. Felton
National Education Assoc.

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

National Education Association

Officers

Mary Hatwood Futrell
PRESIDENT

Keith Geiger
VICE-PRESIDENT

Roxanne Bradshaw
SECRETARY-TREASURER

Don Cameron
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Staff

Ruby King-Williams
ASSOCIATE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR FOR PUBLIC AFFAIRS

Charles T. Williams
DIRECTOR, HUMAN & CIVIL RIGHTS

Conference Coordination
Martha L. Ware
Marilyn F. Johnston
Carolyn O'Neal
Paul Putnam

Conference Logistics
Lynette B. Johnson
Dorothy Byars

Program Assistance
Gaye Barker
Boyd Bosma
Mary Faber
Ron Houston
F.J. Johnson
Marilyn F. Johnston
Wil Luria
Ramon Mac Farlane
Pam Ryan
Dorothy Massie
Mary Sosa
Barbara Stein
Stefanie Weiss

Materials
Paul Putnam
Hazel W. Blakey

Registration and Technical Assistance
Lynette B. Johnson
Dorothy Byars
Lauvon Carter
Cathy Hough
Doris Peace
Janice Pearson
Vanessa Robinson
Jeanita S. Smith
Barbara Sterling
Toni Williams
Martha D. Webb

Program and Report
Stefanie Weiss

NEA Committee on Human Relations
Teasther W. Smith, Chair, Michigan
Benny Wilson Amos, Oklahoma
Patricia E. Arakaki, Utah
Terry Barnes, Illinois
Ollie Besteiro, Texas
Evan Goldman, New Jersey
Roger A. Gooden, California
Robert Marley, Kansas
John R. McIntyre, South Dakota
Deborah Thurston, Georgia

NEA Committee on Civil Rights
Paul O. LaPlante, Chair, Massachusetts
Karen E. Ellis, Idaho
Susie C. Jablinske, Maryland
James Logan, Tennessee
Richard E. Vail, Louisiana
Doris M. Watson, Texas
Theodore Wentz, Pennsylvania
Walter A. Young, Jr., Delaware
Keith A. Zook, Michigan

Carol Gerson
DESIGN

William E. Dresser
TYPESETTING

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

INTRODUCTION

The deeply troubling circumstances of many children's lives limit their ability to learn, their access to an equal educational opportunity, and their basic civil rights. As education employees, National Education Association members must deal with these societal problems—poverty, neglect, child abuse, racism, sexism, drug and alcohol abuse, depression, and teen pregnancy—before any real teaching and learning can take place.

How NEA members and their communities can work together to solve these problems was the subject of NEA's 23rd Annual Conference on Human and Civil Rights in Education—"Children, Families, and Public Schools: Building Community Alliances for Learning."

There were four major conference objectives:

1) to define the problems impeding efforts to achieve equity and excellence in education;

2) to identify appropriate school, NEA state and local affiliate, family and community responses to these problems;

3) to establish a commitment to build alliances that will work toward overcoming barriers to equity and excellence; and

4) to develop back-home plans for cooperative work toward these goals.

Blandina Cardenas Ramirez, director of training at the International Development Research Association and a member of the U.S. Civil Rights Commission, opened the conference with her talk on building alliances for equity in education. Other major speakers at the conference were Marian Wright Edelman, president of the Children's Defense Fund; Rep. George Miller (D-Ca.), chair of the House Select Committee on Children, Youth, and Families; and Keith Geiger, NEA vice-president.

On the conference's first day, seminar sessions dealt with the social problems children, families, and schools face: hunger, child abuse and neglect, racial, cultural, and economic alienation, latchkey children, drug and alcohol abuse, student testing and tracking, runaways, pregnant students, and teenage depression and suicide.

On the second day, the conference sessions focused on community-wide solutions to these problems. Topics included maintaining cultural identity in school integration, bringing families into the teaching-learning process, finding the right resources for assistance, opening new technology to minorities and women, and early childhood education.

And finally, on the third day, conference participants "moved into action." Grouped by an issue of interest, participants worked in small sessions to formulate plans for implementing solutions in their own communities.

In his concluding remarks, NEA Vice-President Geiger summed up the message of the conference: "Teachers and parents, school employees and communities—together we can make a difference if we extend our vision, if we link ourselves to ever-widening networks of concerned educators, concerned parents, concerned school board members, and concerned legislators."

All photos by Joe DiDio

Keynote Session
Blandina Cárdenas Ramírez

Blandina Cardenas Ramirez, director of training at the International Development Research Association, a member of the U.S. Civil Rights Commission, and an NEA member, delivered the keynote address. Ramirez spoke about how education employees can address the needs of children whose educations are hampered by the effects of historical discrimination. The following are excerpts from her speech.

Those of us who grew up knowing discrimination, those of us who grew up knowing the effects of discrimination and the effects of bigotry on our parents, and our grandparents, always understood that the work that we did was so the next generation would not have to suffer, would not have to be held back. . . . There is no loftier civil rights issue than the issue of the next generation.

It seems to me that the most grievous failure of leadership in contemporary America is the failure to advocate for children. And when I say failure of leadership, I do not restrict myself exclusively to the President of the United States. It is not surprising that a man who took three years to meet his grandchild would not advocate for children. But it is surprising that so many political leaders on both sides of the aisle—who know better—allow our government to reduce its advocacy for children.

As more and more women get into the work force, and as more and more mothers of infants enter the work force, we have developing in our communities hodgepodge alternate care systems, which we have little ability to track in terms of quality, safety, reliability, or excellence.

A new mother in our society more and more finds herself going back into the work force at the end of six weeks. We have no idea of the effect of that on bonding, we have no idea whether two more weeks might make a big difference, or a month might help that mother get better organized, might respond to her emotional needs as well as the child's. There is no advocacy for families, and there is no advocacy for children, and those effects, which poor and minority children have suffered for so very long, are being felt now among middle class families, also.

The fact of the matter is that most of the efforts that are going forward in attempting to bring forth excellence in education, suffer not from racism in the traditional sense; they suffer from ignorance. They suffer from ignorance about the nature of human development....Why can't we keep in mind in designing those agendas for excellence that children have emotional needs and that the emotional impacts the intellectual?

We know that children develop socially. And yet, more and more, the excellence proposals allow for fewer and fewer options for children to develop socially, offer less and less support of children in their very difficult task of social development.

I think that if we do a better job in the pursuit of excellence, it will be clear that that requires a complete job in the pursuit of equity. The two are indivisible.

I think at the local level and at the state level, the organized teaching profession must bring to the local agenda concerns about the comprehensive development of children, must advocate for the support of families in the comprehensive development of their children, and must come up with innovative approaches and support innovative approaches for dealing with some of those very tough problem areas.

Schools and teachers can support at the school district and at the local level the development of a spirit of community which supports those civil rights policies such as affirmative action, which can move a community forward in eradicating the effects of past and present discrimination.

Teachers can remind our leadership that we need to start looking at kids and their families as whole human beings, and bureaucracies should be, first and foremost, advocates for those children and families. The affairs of politics are not ends in themselves, but are the means by which we can serve the next generation.

Hunger and Nutrition in a Land of Plenty

Hungry children cannot learn and often are disruptive enough to stop others from learning as well. Panelists in this session discussed the extent of hunger in the classroom, the effects of hunger on learning and behavior, and the effects of recent budget cuts and weakened legislation on attempts to solve the problem. Included in the discussion were these facts:

- Statistics released last year by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services reveal that as many as 500,000 low-income children under the age of six are suffering from malnutrition.
- The four basic child nutrition programs—School Lunch, School Breakfast, Child Care Food, and Summer Food—were reduced 29 percent from fiscal years 1982 to 1985. Funding for these programs has been cut by over $5 billion.
- As a result of the 1981 cuts, the number of children receiving school lunches fell by about 2.5 million. The number of low-income children receiving free or reduced price lunches dropped by close to 700,000.
- There is a great deal of evidence associating undernutrition with impaired mental performance and there is some evidence that undernutrition, independent of other factors, can be a cause of mental impairment.
- Research has shown that severely undernourished children score poorly on perceptual, cognitive, and psychological tests. Similar findings are reported for children suffering from mild-to-moderate undernutrition; some evidence suggests that severe, moderate, and even mild undernutrition are associated with diminished verbal abilities.

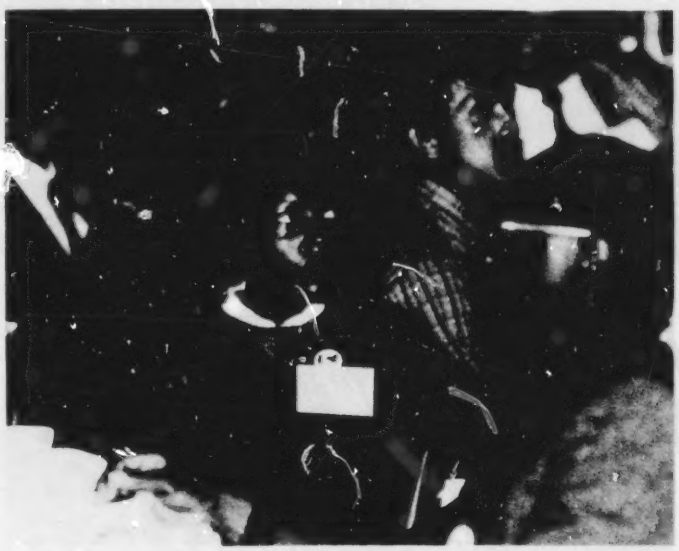
PANELISTS

Deborah Curtis
Legislative Assistant
to Senator Edward M. Kennedy
(D-Mass.)
Washington, D.C.

Wendy Tempro
President
Tempro Association, Inc.
Brooklyn, New York

Tom Mela
Director of Litigation
Massachusetts Advocacy Center
Boston, Massachusetts

Ed Cooney
Attorney
Food Research and Action Center
Washington, D.C.



RESOURCES

Hunger. *NEA Today*, May, 1984. For copies, write to NEA Communications, 1201 16th St., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036.

Going Hungry in America. Report by Senator Edward M. Kennedy to the Committee on Labor and Human Resources, United States Senate, Dec. 22, 1983. For copies, write to the Labor and Human Resources Committee, Minority Staff Office, Senate-Hart Office Building 831, Washington, D.C. 20510.

Doing More With Less: Innovative Ideas for Reducing Costs in the School Nutrition Programs. Food Research and Action Center (FRAC), 1319 F St., N.W., Suite 500, Washington, D.C. 20004 (202) 393-5060. Copies are available for $10. Yearly subscriptions to FRAC newspaper, *Food lines*, are available for $20.

"Food Fight: A Report on Teenagers' Eating Habits and Nutritional Status." Citizens Policy Center, 1984. For copies, write to Citizens Policy Center, 1515 Webster St., #401, Oakland, California 94612.

Relationships of Hunger and Malnutrition to Learning Ability and Behavior. The Nutrition Education Center and The Florida Department of Citrus, 1981. For free copies, write to The Nutrition Education Center, Benedict House, The Pennsylvania State University, University Park, Pennsylvania 16802, (814) 865-6323.

Child Abuse and Neglect

Reports of child abuse have increased 100 percent over the last eight years. The numbers of child sexual abuse cases and missing children have greatly increased—as has public awareness of them—in recent years. This workshop focused on the role of teachers and local associations in dealing with these profoundly troubling issues.

The Metropolitan Nashville Education Association's efforts to help educate about and prevent child abuse was used as an example of a comprehensive community-wide training and awareness program. MNEA's Women's Concerns Committee, with funding from the Hank Snow International Foundation for Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect, produced a resource manual and worked to train one "resource" teacher in every school. In addition, education and training was provided for larger numbers of teachers, principals, child protective service workers, and parents.

Other topics covered included: teachers' legal responsibilities in reporting suspected cases of abuse and neglect, the relationship between failure to pay child support payments and abuse, the relationship between learning disabilities and abuse, legislation with regard to reporting suspected abuse, fingerprinting of education and child care employees, the relationship between teachers and abusive parents, and abuse prevention programs.

PANELISTS

Myrna Peralta-Guevara
Director, Services to Families and Veterans
American Red Cross, D.C. Chapter
Washington, D.C.

Louise Smith
Health Occupations Teacher
Maplewood High School
Nashville, Tennessee

Robert Horowitz
Associate Director
National Legal Resource Center For Child Advocacy and Protection
American Bar Association
Washington, D.C.

Thea Hambright
School Social Worker
Alexandria Public Schools
Alexandria, Virginia

RESOURCES

The NEA Child Abuse and Neglect Multimedia Training Program contains:

(1) **books and pamphlets:** *Child Abuse and Neglect: A Teacher's Handbook for Detection, Reporting, and Classroom Management; Teacher Recommended Resources; Informational Guidelines for Students, Questions Teachers Ask About Legal Aspects of Reporting.*

(2) **filmstrips:** *Recognizing Child Abuse and Neglect, The Abusive Parent – Lee's Story,* and *A Victim Remembers;*

(3) **audiotapes:** *Profiles of Abusive and Neglectful Parents, The Professional Team, Support Groups and Services, The Administrators' Perspective, A Dragon in My Closet, Deborah Wore Designer Jeans, Talking With the Victim, Setting Up a Program,* and *Resource Organizations;* and

(4) **workshop materials:** *A Guide and Plan for Conducting Six Workshops on Child Abuse and Neglect and Workshop Handouts.*

Cost to NEA affiliates – $137, to others – $199.95. For more information, write to NEA Professional Library, 1201 16th St., N.W. Washington, D.C. 20036, or call (202) 822-7200.

Early Misgivings: A Film on Child Abuse. Produced, directed and written by Leonard Kurz; color, 29 minutes; 16mm and video. Rental – $50, Purchase – 16mm, $425; video $300. Distributed by Cinema Guild, 1697 Broadway, New York, New York 10019.

SIECUS (Sex Information and Education Council of the U.S.) Report. Special Child Sexual Abuse Issue, September 1984. Write to 80 Fifth Avenue, New York, New York 10011.

Public Concern and Personal Action: Child Sexual Abuse. Children's Hospital National Medical Center, 1980, 111 Michigan Ave., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20010.

The Educator's Role in the Prevention and Treatment of Child Abuse and Neglect. Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1984. Write to Documents Division, Washington, D.C. 20402.

Overcoming Racial, Cultural, and Economic Alienation

This session dealt with how society's alienating factors—racism, sexism, elitism, fear of differences, and fear of handicaps—affect not only our school systems, but also a group of youngsters NEA members rarely discuss—the 50,000 children awaiting adoption today. These children are victims of racial, cultural, and economic alienation.

It was suggested that if each public school—faculty members or students' families—agreed to try to place one special needs child, and did it, the majority of waiting children could have families. Conference participants discussed the problems inherent in this proposal, and also the tragedy of not finding any solution.

The problem of overcoming racial and cultural alienation in our schools was discussed. The staff of the Maryland State Department of Education, through its Office of Equal Opportunity, shared with conference participants its professional development model which trains teachers and administrators to deal with such alienation.

Solutions to economic discrimination—including pay equity, equal pay for equal work, affirmative action programs, legislation, and collective bargaining—were also addressed in this session.

PANELISTS

Roy Maurer
National Director
North American Council on Adoptable Children, Inc.
Washington, D.C.

Woodrow B. Grant, Jr.
Director, Office of Equal Opportunity
Maryland State Department of Education
Baltimore, Maryland

Stephen M. Levinson
Human Rights Administrator
Office of Human Rights
City of Alexandria, Virginia
Alexandria, Virginia

RESOURCES

The NAACP Preliminary Report on Public School Education: An Update of the 1977 NAACP Report on Quality Education for Black Americans, An Imperative. National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, 1984, 186 Remsen St., Brooklyn Heights, New York 11201.

Thirty Years After Brown. National Urban League, New York, New York, 1984, 600 East 62nd St., New York, New York 10021.

Three Cities That Are Making Desegregation Work: Thirty Years After Brown. National Education Association, Washington, D.C., 1984, 1201 16th St., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036.

Excellence and Equity, Quality and Inequality: A Report on Civil Rights, Education, and Black Children. National Black Child Development Institute, Inc., 1983, 1463 Rhode Island Ave., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20005.

"Reducing Prejudice in Students: Theory, Research, and Strategies." In **Multicultural Education and Race Relations**, edited by Kogila Adam Moodley, Centre for the Study of Curriculum and Instruction, Faculty of Education, The University of British Columbia, Vancouver, British Columbia, 1985.

The Invisible Culture. S.U. Phillips, Longman (Publisher), New York, 1983.

Inequality in an Age of Decline. Paul Blumberg, Oxford University Press, New York, 1980.

The Outcasts: Missing Children, Runaways, Teenage Suicides, Pregnant Students

Here are some sobering statistics:

- The National Center on Missing and Exploited Children reports that 1.5 million children are reported missing each year. Of these, one million are runaways, an estimated 25,000 to 500,000 have been abducted by noncustodial parents, and between 20,000 to 50,000 are cases that have been unsolved by the end of the year. Each year, at least 5,000 unidentified persons, including hundreds of children, are buried.
- In this country, there are more than one million teenage women with 1.3 million children. Each year, more than 200,000 young women under age 18 give birth. About 11,000 of those births are to girls under age 15.
- Suicide is the second leading cause of death (after car accidents) for those between the ages of 15 and 19. The suicide rate for the 15- to 24-year-old age group more than doubled between 1960 and 1980.

Panelists and participants at this session discussed the reasons for these problems, the warning signs, the tragic results, and most importantly, ways schools and communities can work together to help these children and to work toward the goal of prevention.

PANELISTS

Jane Bucy
Executive Director
National Network of Runaway and Youth Services
Washington, D.C.

Myra Herbert
Coordinator
Fairfax County Schools Social Work Services
Fairfax, Virginia

Margaret C. Dunkle
Co-Director, The Equality Center
Washington, D.C.

RESOURCES

On the topic of missing children:

To Whom Do They Belong? A Profile of America's Runaway and Homeless Youth and the Programs That Help Them. National Network of Runaway and Youth Services 905 6th St., S.W. Washington, D.C. 20034.

National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, 1835 K St., N.W., Suite 700, Washington, D.C. 20006.

ACTION — Missing and Exploited Children Project, 806 Connecticut Ave., N.W., Room M-1007, Washington, D.C. 20525.

On the topic of teenage depression and suicide:

Coping with Teena... Depression: A Parent's Guide. Kathleen McCoy, New American Library, 1982.

A Cry for Help. Mary Elizabeth Griffin and Carol Felsenthal, Doubleday, Garden City, New Jersey, 1983.

Suicide in Children and Adolescents. Syed Husain and Trish Vandiver, Special Medical and Scientific Books, 1984.

Teenage Suicide, an information brochure. National Education Association, Human and Civil Rights, 1201 16th St., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036.

Handbook describing Fairfax County's program dealing with teenage suicide. For copies, write to Myra Herbert, Coordinator, School Social Services, Belle Willard Administrative Center, 10310 Layton Hall Drive, Fairfax, Virginia 22030.

On the topic of teenage pregnancies:

Schools Must Ease the Impact of Teen-Age Pregnancy and Parenthood. Margaret C. Dunkle and Susan M. Bailey, Education Week, Oct. 24, 1984.

The Pregnancy and Parenting Provisions of Title IX. For copies, write to The Equality Center, 2233 Wisconsin Ave., N.W., Washington, D.C., 20007.

The Children's Defense Fund Adolescent Pregnancy Watch Manual. Children's Defense Fund, 122 C St., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20001.

Student Pregnancy: A Prevention Handbook for School Personnel. Available September, 1985 from the NEA Professional Library, 1201 16th St., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036.

Children Left Alone: Latchkey Problems

It is estimated that eight to 10 million children younger than age 18 are latchkey children. Workshop panelists discussed the important factors to consider when making decisions about leaving children alone, and potential community and school-based solutions.

If we are to help latchkey children, speakers said, we must consider the child's age, the child's ability to be self-reliant, the child's health status, the child's preparation for self-care, the availablity and cost of some supervision, and the role of the school and community in supporting child care programs.

Three types of supervised child care solutions were discussed: 1) grassroots answers such as family centers, telephone hot-lines, Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts, day care centers, family centers, and neighborhood "block homes;" 2) private school solutions including independent schools, churches, YMCAs and YWCAs; and 3) public schools that can work with communities to provide after-school child care services.

All the speakers stressed community team work—involving parents, school personnel, medical professionals, businesses, and others—to solve the problems associated with latchkey children and after-school child care.

PANELISTS

Georgia L. McMurray
Deputy General Director
Community Service Society of New York
New York, New York

Roberta Newman
Director, School Age Child Care Program
Fairfax City Office for Children
Fairfax, Virginia

Patricia Fosarelli
Asst. Professor of Pediatrics
Johns Hopkins Medical Institution
Baltimore, Maryland

RESOURCES

Materials:

Latchkey Children. Patricia D. Fosarelli, *Developmental and Behavioral Pediatrics*, Vol. 5, No. 4, August, 1984. For reprints, write to Patricia D. Fosarelli, M.D., The Johns Hopkins Medical Institutions, 601 N. Wolfe St., CMSC 145, Baltimore, Maryland 21205.

Organizations:

School Age Child Care Project, Wellesley College Center for Research on Women, Wellesley, Massachusetts 02181.

The Center for Early Adolescence, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Suite 223, Carr Mill Mall, Carrboro, North Carolina 27510.

Child Care Law Project, 625 Market St., Suite 815, San Francisco, California 94105.

American Association of School Administrators (AASA), 1801 North Moore St., Arlington, Virginia 22209.

Drug and Alcohol Abuse

Discussion at this session focused on how to most effectively educate young people to avoid drug and alcohol abuse. Suggestions included:

- using students to teach other students
- teaching living skills such as assertiveness, decision-making, and how to say "no"
- educating parents to recognize the signs of abuse
- educating parents, education personnel, and students on ways to deal with substance abuse when they do recognize it
- learning not to place blame
- recognizing that students' self-concepts must be strengthened to avoid problems with drug and alcohol abuse
- working to make prevention popular with students and the "in" thing to do.

Panelists and participants agreed on one thing: Drug and alcohol abuse among teens or adults is a community problem in need of a community solution. Schools, parents, churches, police, and community agencies must work together to stop substance abuse.

PANELISTS

Magda Leon
Coordinator, Drug Program
Andromeda Mental Health Center for Hispanics
Washington, D.C.

Richard L. Towers
Director
Interagency Alternative and Supplemental Program
Montgomery County Public Schools
Rockville, Maryland

RESOURCES

Saying No: Drug Abuse Prevention Ideas for the Classroom. National Institute on Drug Abuse, Division of Prevention and Treatment Development, 5600 Fisher's Lane, Rockville, Maryland 20857.

Preventing Adolescent Drug Abuse: Intervention Strategies (NIDA Research Monograph 47). National Institute on Drug Abuse, same address as above.

Adolescent Peer Pressure: Theory Correlates, and Program—Implications for Drug Abuse Prevention. National Institute on Drug Abuse, address above.

Alcohol Health and Research World. Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C. 20402. Subscriptions to the magazine are $11 a year. Single copies are $5. "Special Focus: Treatment Services for Youth" was the topic of the magazine's summer, 1983 issue (Vol. 7, No. 4).

Epidemic: Kids, Drugs, and Alcohol. For more information about renting or buying this film, write to Modern Talking Pictures, 711 4th St., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20001.

Special Needs of Children

The session opened with a videotape about the special needs, concerns, and feelings of minority children in the public schools. Called "Special People . . . Special Needs," the 18-minute video was compiled from interviews with 11 high school students in Arlington, Virginia. Arlington's Wakefield High School was chosen as the filming site because of its diversity—its students represent over 90 nationalities and speak 45 languages.

The featured students—Black, Hispanic, Indian, and Asian—gave their opinions on such concerns as language barriers, cultural differences, discrimination, and isolation from peers, and discussed such comforts as friends, teachers, after-school activities, and community groups.

After the video was shown, a panel comprised of

two students featured in the film, a teacher, a parent, and an administrator—all from Arlington—were present to answer questions from the audience.

PANELISTS

Evelyn Wilson
Director of Guidance
Wakefield High School
Arlington, Virginia

June Brasse
High Intensity Language Training Teacher
Page Elementary School
Arlington, Virginia

Kim Oahn Kooks
Vice President
Vietnamese Parents Association
Arlington, Virginia

Thel Sar
Senior, Wakefield High School
Arlington, Virginia

Brandon Pennix
Senior, Wakefield High School
Arlington, Virginia

RESOURCES

Special People . . . Special Needs, the videotape shown at this session, is available for rental or purchase through NEA's Professional Library. The rental price is $25. Purchase price is $45 for NEA members and $80 for non-members. Both ½" and ¾" tapes are available. Send inquiries and checks to NEA Professional Library, 1201 16th St., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036.

For other resources on this subject, see Maintaining Cultural Identity in School Integration on page 13.

Panelists are from left to right: June Brasse, Thel Sar, Moderator and NEA Secretary-Treasurer Roxanne Bradshaw, Brandon Pennix (also pictured above), and Evelyn Wilson.

Children's Legislative Issues
Marian Wright Edelman

Marian Wright Edelman has been president of the Children's Defense Fund (CDF) since 1973. In 1983, she was named by the Ladies Home Journal *as one of the 100 most influential women in America. Edelman spoke about the legislative priorities of the Reagan administration's 1986 budget proposal as they affect children. The following are excerpts from her speech.*

Martin Luther King said in the middle of the Vietnam war that, "A nation that continues year after year to spend more money on military defense than on programs of social uplift is approaching spiritual death."... If President Reagan's budget priorities succeed, by 1990 every American will be spending 19 percent less on poor children and families, and 86 percent more on defense.

Our leaders dream about a new multi-billion dollar Star Wars system to make our defenses impenetrable against enemy missiles. It would be nice if they could dream of a smaller, achievable war against the internal enemies of child poverty—a war that saves and enhances, rather than takes and threatens human life.

By 1990, 22,000 American babies are going to die primarily because of low birth weight. We can prevent at least one in eight of these infant deaths, and thousands of handicapping conditions—simply by providing their mothers prenatal care. For seven percent—or 25 days of the defense budget increase, again just next year—every poor mother and baby could be provided Medicaid, and thus, prenatal care coverage.

If President Reagan's proposed Medicaid cuts take place, an additional 10 million children will be at risk of losing some Medicaid benefits or eligibility—and I think we should ask, how many four pound babies will it take to balance the federal budget?

In the Reagan decade, we are building 17,000 new nuclear weapons, at an estimated cost of $71 billion. The new Reagan budget allows only enough money to stockpile one month of vaccination serum for children. As a result, two million fewer children will be able to be immunized next year over last year, if the Reagan budget request prevails. And this is at a time when half of all Black pre-school children are not fully immunized against DPT and polio.

The President's budget proposes to take another $650 million from child nutrition programs, although $5 billion has already been cut from these programs. That means that several million additional children will lose school lunches under this proposal, and children in family day care homes will lose the bulk of their federal child care food support.

I think we who care about people and decency and fairness have got to say that Congress should first convince President Reagan, Defense Secretary Weinberger and the powerful special interest beneficiaries of defense and tax largesse to make defecit reduction their first priority—before sending poor, handicapped, and homeless children again to the front lines of a deficit reduction war that no one else is fighting.

With the Children's Survival Bill, we're trying to take the initiative to say that it's time for the nation to undertake a range of specific steps to give young people skills and employment opportunities to enable them to contribute to, rather than depend on, the community.

We are putting special emphasis on adolescent pregnancy prevention. In 1983, 523,000 babies were born to teen mothers; 10,000 of these were babies born to girls 14 and under. We need to deal with this as a major issue because children having children is like an engine that is driving new generations of poor children.

The key to the teen pregnancy issue, I am convinced now after two years of homework, is giving young people hope, is having them have a stake in the future, of having a sense that they're going somewhere, that there's a job there, that they can read, and they can write, and they've got some skills, and they feel respected and have a basis for demanding that respect.

Not failure, but low aim is sin. And I hope that of all the things that will go on this year, at least those of us who care about children will keep our aim high. That is the least we can do for them.

Ms. Edelman's information comes from a recent Children's Defense Fund publication called *A Children's Defense Budget: An Analysis of the President's FY 1986 Budget and Children.* To order a copy of the 300-page book, send $15.95 to 122 C St., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20001. Attention Kathleen Eriser. Make checks payable to the Children's Defense Fund. Postage and handling are included.

Community and School Responses
George Miller

Congressman George Miller (D-California) is often called "the leading spokesman for children on Capitol Hill." In 1983, he became the first chair of the House Select Committee on Children, Youth and Families, a committee he helped to create. Congressman Miller spoke about the role of the federal government in bringing about solutions to [illegible] lems. The following are excerpts from [illegible].

As we traveled t[illegible]d to New York and to De[illegible]t, and to Cleveland and Orange County and San Francisco and to Salt Lake City, what we saw was that in almost each and every case, where those communities, that state, that city, that county cared, a number of the problems that plague politicians could be dealt with, and they're the very problems that have brought you here this weekend.

We saw teenage pregnancy rates in Central High School in St. Paul drop because the school said we cannot abandon these children, we have to counsel them properly prior to their sexual experiences. Those, who unfortunately find out they're pregnant, we've got to support them, we've got to provide the resources, we've got to provide the education, we've got to provide the day care centers so they can continue their education.

Pregnancy rate dropped in half, second time pregnancies dropped by almost two-thirds. Members [of Congress] were astounded that you can affect teenage pregnancy.

We saw cases where you could prevent birth defects—$25 a month during pregnancy. You could reduce infant mortality by half, you could reduce birth defects by two-thirds by just bringing up the birth weight of that child.

So what we saw was that we could do it. And the question started to become a haunting one--because no longer could politicians wander in the abstract, and wonder, what can we do for those teenagers who decide to take their own lives or who are contemplating it, what can we do for those children who are subject to birth defects, what can we do for the learning disabled children or the handicapped children?

That no longer is the issue. The issue now for us as policy makers is what are we *willing* to do? What are we willing to do in the way of an investment in our children? The important thing to learn is that now it's almost malfeasance of office if we don't take action, because we can point to examples throughout this country where, with proper resources, the lives of children and families are dramatically changed and enhanced, and in some cases, where death is in fact deterred.

Each and every one of the social programs—the child welfare service; Headstart; the Women, Infant, and Children nutrition program; the maternal and child health program, the community health centers—all of these according to audits done by the Reagan administration, have been effective in terms of the services they've delivered. They've been cost effective, and they've deferred long term costs to the federal government.

All of them are slated for cuts by this administration. So you must remove from your mind the notion that this is a campaign against waste, fraud and abuse. What you must understand is that they are not willing to make this investment.

We've got to understand that the issue of civil rights that brings you here today is changing and is far more fundamental today, because those opportunities that are denied at an early age because of a pregnancy that has gone wrong, because of nutrition that was not available in the first six months of life, because of the inability of resources of local educational agencies to provide special education. Because of those lost opportunities, very fundamental civil rights in this country—the right to earn a living, the right to an education that makes you functional in our society—are being denied.

You name the issue, and we'll show you a dozen places in the country where it's being dealt with, and in some cases being eradicated. In some cases, where politicians can't bring themselves to say what the problem is, we can show them the solution, not designed in Washington, but designed out there in communities that care.

We hope to be able on the Select Committee to continue to produce the evidence that the ability is there, should we desire to call upon it. And the returns are so great that if I went to Wall Street, and I promised investors a three-to-one return on their money for every dollar they invested, they would be lined up around the block. Now it's about time that we line up to get that return on the investment in our children.

Overcoming the School Obstacle Course: Testing, Screening, Tracking

This session dealt with the critical question of how parents and teachers can best advocate for the educational needs and interests of students. The tracking of students into inappropriate classes and how such screening affects minorities were discussed. It was stated that there is a higher correlation between participation in special education and being a Black male, than there is between special education and I.Q. scores.

Panelists and participants discussed common sense suggestions for parental and teacher involvement in overcoming education obstacles, including:

- urging parents to attend parent/teacher conferences and other school functions
- urging parents to visit classrooms and talk to principals
- working with parents to create home environments that complement the school
- working with parents and teachers to tap the capabilities students demonstrate in non-academic avenues, build on them, and relate them to educational experiences.

PANELISTS

Rims Barber
Mississippi Project Director
Children's Defense Fund
Jackson, Mississippi

Dale Vigil
Director
Center for Hispanic Educational Leadership
Denver, Colorado

RESOURCES

Center for the Study of Testing, Boston College, Chestnut Hill, Massachusetts 02167.

Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory, Center for Performance Assessment, 300 S.W. Sixth Ave., Portland, Oregon 97204.

Center for Teaching and Learning, The University of North Dakota, Grand Forks, North Dakota 58202.

University of Colorado, Laboratory of Education Research, 2860 Colvey Drive, Boulder, Colorado 80303.

Minnesota Center for Social Research, 2122 Riverside Ave., Minneapolis, Minnesota 55454.

Huron Institute, 123 Mt. Auburn St., Cambridge, Massachusetts 02138.

UCLA Graduate School of Education, Center for the Study of Evaluation, Moore Hall, 405 Hilgard Ave., Los Angeles, California 90024.

Maintaining Cultural Identity in School Integration

Discussions of school integration usually center on how this process relates to groups once segregated from each other by law. A difficult and important new challenge, the subject of this session, is the effort to integrate into our school system the children of the nation's new immigrants—families from such countries as Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos, Thailand, China, and those in Central America.

In Arlington County, Virginia, 20 percent of the students speak 40 different languages. These students represent 45 countries, and a vast array of cultural backgrounds. Chris Burman, Arlington parent coordinator, and three parents representing the new immigrant families, talked with participants in this session about how the students, the families, and the school system are coping with the urgent and difficult problems of this new kind of school integration.

Burman explained to participants the various levels of Arlington's English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) and High Intensity Language Training (HILT) programs, and the work that the school system is doing to help the immigrant students retain appreciation for the values of their own culture—recognizing that until they learn the American language, they will not be able to share those values with their new classmates.

Three parent leaders of the new immigrant groups talked of the problems they have faced in adjusting to their new country, and in trying to help their children become a part of a new and alien way of life. In expressing his own concerns, Tri Khac Pham, who was a teacher in Vietnam, seemed to speak for many: "We are ignorant of the basic principles and structures of American society, including the educational system in this country. We feel guilty about our children because we are unable to assist them in their struggle towards a normal development . . . they cannot ask for help, advice or guidance from their parents as American children do when they are in trouble. Our children are alone with their problems. . . . As for us, their parents whom they should be able to rely upon, we feel useless in response to their cries for help."

The discussion made clear that the school system alone cannot meet the differing needs of all of its students, particularly those students for whom language itself is a barrier both to education and to building friendships in a new school environment. The parents themselves must be active participants; and the school system and other community agencies—the churches and social service organizations—must provide the support that will facilitate such involvement. In Arlington, all of these various agencies are working together toward their mutual goal of quality integrated education.

RESOURCES

Materials:

Three Cities That Are Making Desegregation Work—30 Years After Brown. National Education Association. For copies, write to NEA Human and Civil Rights, 1201 16th St., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036.

Organizations:

Center for Bilingual Multicultural Teacher Preparation, George Mason University, 4400 University Drive, Fairfax, Virginia 22030.

National Clearinghouse for Bilingual Education, 1300 Wilson Boulevard, Suite B2-11, Rosslyn, Virginia 22209.

National Committee for School Desegregation, 63 Hubbard Avenue, Cambridge, Massachusetts 02140.

Institute for Responsive Education, 605 Commonwealth Ave., Boston, Massachusetts 02215.

Division of Civil Rights and Intercultural Relations, 471 Education Building Annex, New York State Education Department, Albany, New York 12234.

PANELISTS

Chris Burman
Parent Coordinator
Arlington Public Schools
Arlington, Virginia

Tri Khac Pham
President
Vietnamese Parents Association
Arlington, Virginia

Noeuth Uy Chantrea
President
Khmer Parents Association
Arlington, Virginia

Dama Garate
Bilingual Resource Assistant
Arlington Public Schools
Counselor, Arlington County Mental Health Department
Arlington, Virginia

Bringing Families into the Teaching-Learning Process

This session focused on the various programs the Home and School Institute (HSI) has developed and implemented. These programs have been pioneering, practical programs designed to unite the educational forces of the home, the school, and the community on behalf of children's learning.

The HSI panelists, through audio-visual representations of their programs, provided conference participants with practical self-help and community approaches to the building of student achievement and family life.

HSI bases its programs on five main premises:

- The stereotypical middle class family no longer exists in America; for better or worse, a new American family is now in place.
- Society must reflect the needs of parents and children in new family arrangements.
- A more effective partnership between home and school must be fostered. To this end, schools can become facilitators for change, for support, and for recognition of the strengths and needs of every child and every family.
- Teachers want and need inservice training and education for working with today's families.
- Partnerships among community organizations, private groups and schools can be built. This cooperative effort can bring about a greater sensitivity to the needs of families.

Dorothy Rich (at overhead projector) and Valerie G. Neal (standing) show participants how they can work to expand each child's educational world.

Among the major topics of discussion was the joint effort NEA and HSI launched last year, the Parent-Teacher Partnership Project. This project, now in effect in 12 school districts, aims to empower teachers to work in team efforts with families to build student abilities.

PANELISTS

Dorothy Rich
Founder and President
The Home and School Institute
Washington, D.C.

Valerie G. Neal
Education Specialist
The Home and School Institute, and District of Columbia Public Schools.

RESOURCES

Materials:

Action Plan for Excellence: A Comprehensive Plan to Improve Our Nation's Schools. Education Commission of the States 1983, 1860 Lincoln St., Suite 300, Denver Colorado 80295.

Improving American Education: Roles for Parents. J. Epstein, Washington, D.C. testimony for the Select Committee on Children, Youth and Families, U.S. House of Representatives, H2-385 House Annex 2, Washington, D.C. 20515.

Work and Family Life Among Anglo, Black and Mexican American Single-Parent Families: Executive Summary. R. Espinosa, Southwest Educational Development Laboratory, Austin, Texas, 1983. Address below.

Final Report: Parent-School Partnership Project. Home and School Institute, Washington, D.C., U.S. Department of Education, Special Education Services, 1983. Address below.

Focus for Educational Reform: Building a Home-School Infrastructure. Dorothy Rich, paper presented at the National Commission on Execellence in Education Forum, Indianapolis, Indiana, 1983. Write to HSI, address below.

Children, Youth and Families: 1983, A Year End Report. Select Committee on Children, Youth and Families, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C. 20402, 1984.

Executive Summary: A Survey of Parents Regarding Parent Involvement in Schools. D.L. Williams, Southwest Educational Development Laboratory, Austin, Texas, 1982. Address below.

Organizations:

Home and School Institute, 1201 16th St., N.W., Suite 228, Washington, D.C. 20036, (202) 466-3633.

Southwest Educational Development Laboratory, 211 E. 7th St., Austin, Texas 78701, (512) 476-6861.

Who Can Help: Reporting Problems and Identifying Resources for Assistance

Speakers at this session spoke first about the most effective ways to deal with children's problems: identify them early and get appropriate remedial help. For example, a teacher's concern about an individual child can lead to critical help with a speech or hearing problem or other learning disability. And, community-wide concern with equal educational opportunities can lead to quality early childhood education—the most effective way to avoid educational and societal problems later on.

Conflicts between teachers who think a child needs special help and parents who disagree were discussed. Participants also raised questions about the extent of a teacher's responsibility and the increased potential for teacher burn-out when dealing with children's problems becomes an overwhelming burden.

All speakers agreed that it is essential for teachers to form links with community and government agencies to deal with students' concerns, to prevent overburdening teachers, and to permit learning to take place.

PANELISTS

Janet Price
Senior Attorney
Advocates for Children of New York, Inc.
Long Island City, New York

Robert Brown
Executive Director
Southeastern Public Education Program
Macon, Georgia

Noe Medina
Education Director
Children's Defense Fund
Washington, D.C.

RESOURCES

Advocates for Children of New York, Inc., 24-16 Bridge Plaza South, Long Island City, New York 11101, (212) 729-8866.

National Council of La Raza, 20 F St., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20001, (202) 628-9600.

The Equality Center, 2233 Wisconsin Ave., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20007, (202) 298-7572.

Southeastern Public Education Program, P.O. Box 5742, Macon, Georgia 31208, (912) 742-3335.

National Coalition of Advocates for Students, 76 Summer St., Room 350, Boston, Massachusetts 02110, (617) 357-8507.

Children's Defense Fund, 122 C St., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20001, (202) 628-8787.

Improving the Odds: Opening New Technology to Minorities and Women

The integration of women and minorities into technological fields not only involves their economic survival, but is critical to the well-being of the country and its businesses. This session's speakers discussed ways to encourage women and minorities to develop their interests in science and to improve their access to and comfort with computers. Suggestions included:

- Put on a community-supported "career fair" to encourage interest by junior and senior high school women in non-traditional fields.
- Have science museums provide programs to encourage students into math and science careers; invite scientists to speak in the schools.
- Place computers in classrooms in which females and minorities don't already have anxiety; for instance, put computers in English and history classes, not just in math and science classes.
- Place computers in the school library so students have access before or after school. Make sure time is precisely scheduled.
- Make sure computers are available in public libraries or museums, so that those without home computers can still have access to computer learning.
- Make sure that all computer software does not support or create racial, cultural, or gender stereotypes.

PANELISTS

Shirley Malcom
Program Head
Office of Opportunities of the American Association for the Advancement of Science
Washington, D.C.

Yolanda George
Director of Development
Association of Science Technology Centers
Washington, D.C.

Barbara Andreozzi
Teacher and Co-President
League of Women Voters
Flathead County, Montana
Whitefish, Montana

Deborah Arrindell
Senior Specialist
Education Fund Social Policy Division
League of Women Voters
Washington, D.C.

RESOURCES

Materials:

Inservice training program for teachers, administrators, and counselors. Write to Equals, Lawrence Hall of Science, University of California at Berkeley, Berkeley, California 94702.

Expanding Your Horizons, a packet on what you can do in your community to set up a program encouraging girls into nontraditional fields. Send $2 to Mills College, Math/Science Resource Center, Oakland, California 94613.

Organizations:

Ideas for Equitable Computer Learning, American Institute for Research, P.O. Box 1113, Palo Alto, California 94302.

Project on Equal Education Rights, National Organization for Women Legal Defense and Education Fund, 1413 K St., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20005. Write for information and research on equity in computer education.

Multiplying Options and Subtracting Bias, Women in Mathematics Project, George Mason University, 4400 University Drive, Fairfax, Virginia 22030.

Early Childhood Education: A Path Out of Poverty

Quality early childhood education can really make a difference. According to panelists at this workshop, pre-school paid off for the students enrolled and for society. Students enrolled in quality pre-school programs were less likely to drop out, be enrolled in special education classes, or have delinquency problems, and more likely to do more homework, get better grades, and go to college. According to one study, society saves $4000 for every $1000 invested in early childhood education.

Richmond, Virginia Public Schools Follow Through Program was shown as an example of a high quality program that brings home and school together. Parents involved in this program are trained in teaching methods, and trained to teach other parents. Teachers then visit homes for conferences and to explain how classroom lessons can be reinforced at home.

All panelists agreed on the lack of quality early childhood programs for all students, but especially for poor and minority students. Legislative and public policy issues on this subject—including licensing, the use of public school facilities for child care, dwindling federal financial resources, health and safety standards, and community support for programs—were discussed.

PANELISTS

Carla Curtis
Public Policy Analyst
National Black Child Development Institute, Inc.
Washington, D.C.

Russell M. Busch
Director, Federal Programs and Special Events
Richmond Public Schools
Richmond, Virginia

Ronald Robertson
Public Relations and Media Specialist
Follow Through Program
Richmond, Virginia

Larry Schweinhart
Director, Voice for Children Project
High Scope Educational Research Foundation
Ypsilanti, Michigan

RESOURCES

Materials:

Changed Lives: The Effects of the Perry Preschool Program on Youths Through Age 19. Berrueta-Clement, J.R., Schweinhart, L.J., Barnett, W.S., Epstein, A.S., & Weikart, D.P., 1984. For copies, send $15 to the High/Scope Press, 600 N. River St., Ypsilanti, Michigan 48197, (313) 485-2000.

Lasting effects of preschool education on children from low-income families in the United States. Berrueta-Clement, J.R., Schweinhart, L.J. & Weikart, D.P., 1983. This article can be found in Preventing school failure: The relationship between preschool and primary education, International Development Research Centre, Ottawa, Canada.

Organizations:

National Black Child Development Institute, 1463 Rhode Island Ave., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20005, (202) 387-1281.

Fairfax County Office for Children, School-Age Child Care Project, 10396 Democracy Lane, Fairfax, Virginia 22030, (703) 691-3175.

Parent Education Resource Center — Follow Through Program, Richmond City Hall, 301 North 9th St., Richmond, Virginia 23219, (804) 780-5341.

Moving Into Action

After Friday's discussion of problems, and Saturday's talk of possible solutions, by Sunday, participants were ready to make plans for real change in their own communities. Organized into small groups by subject area, participants met Sunday morning to analyze an issue, set goals, and make proposals, complete with objectives, target audiences, desired products, assigned responsibilities, and timelines.

Although each small group came up with different ideas, all plans had some common elements: coalition building, public relations, community organizing, fund raising, legislative action, and advocacy within the Association. Three examples of specific planning models follow.

1) CHILDREN LEFT ALONE: LATCHKEY PROBLEMS

Proposal: A local association will lead a campaign to bring about a before-and-after-school child care program sponsored by the community but using public and private school facilities and staff. Efforts will be supported by the public schools, but financed by the community.

Plans: Steps toward achieving this goal will include: 1) conducting a community need assessment, 2) establishing a community-wide coalition for children, 3) lobbying for legislation, and 4) training staff.

Each workshop participant will start this chain of events by approaching his or her local association with the idea of starting a latchkey program. Each will work to get the association to develop a policy statement in support of the program. Each will ask that a specific committee be established to coordinate the program effort. Each committee will work to:

- gather relevant data
- build community coalition
- discuss responsibilities
- develop specific action plans
- get support of school board, and local legislators
- mount education/public relations campaign
- spread the word about successful product.

2) CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT

Proposal: A local association will take the lead in getting educational personnel trained to deal with victims and perpetrators of child abuse and neglect.

Plans: Specific objectives of training would be to make educational personnel aware of:

- the definition and signs of child abuse and neglect

- state and local laws and policies on child abuse and neglect, legal protections, liabilities, and responsibilities
- community resources available to help with these issues.

Local activists will contact a local child abuse agency and/or the NEA for help in setting up and leading the training. Activists will ask their local associations to buy one NEA Child Abuse and Neglect Multimedia Training Program to be used community-wide.

3) THE OUTCASTS

Proposal: A local association will build a Children's Coalition Roundtable to: 1) help increase self-esteem among local youth and decrease their sense of isolation, and 2) bring community organizations together to work on the critical issues of runaways, teen depression and suicide, and teen pregnancy.

Plans: A local association will take the following steps toward this goal:

- establish a study commission to obtain adequate data on the crisis issues and develop a cooperation plan for local and state agencies
- interest community groups in supporting the idea of and forming a Roundtable
- develop inservice training for school personnel based on local needs
- develop individual curriculum on prevention of each of these problems
- work to gain support of local and state legislatures for all plans and for possible funding.

Other conference participants worked on plans to combat drug and alcohol abuse, to ease desegregation and integration efforts, and to fight hunger. Keep a lookout in *NEA Now* and *NEA Today* for reports on the progress conference participants made in implementing these plans.

Conclusions
Keith Geiger

Keith Geiger, a high school math and science teacher, was elected vice president of NEA in 1983. He has served as president of the Michigan Education Association and the Livonia Education Association. Geiger spoke about the need for school employees and communities to work together to improve the education of those students who bring life's most difficult problems into the classroom. The following are excerpts from the conference's concluding speech.

Society's problems, some people say, are none of the school's business. They say teachers should be drilling the basics, not dealing with social ills. They say schools can't afford to address social problems. But we know otherwise. As men and women who teach and staff our nation's public schools, we know that we can't afford *not* to deal with society's problems—with poverty, with neglect, with abuse, with racism—with all the problems that block our students' roads to learning.

We want all of our students to learn—each and every one of them. And we know that we can't teach all the children until we break down and overcome each and every obstacle to learning. . . . As educators, we believe that public schools should—and must—even up the odds for students who haven't been given an even chance in life.

We see all of these social problems every day in our classrooms, and we ignore them at our risk; for if we ignore them, our classrooms cease to be places of learning, and we cease to be educators. We address these problems because we have no other choice.

We hold it self-evident that schools cannot solve society's problems in isolation. To make a positive impact, teachers and other school staff members must reach out to parents, reach out to their communities. Cooperation is the key, understanding is the goal.

Unfortunately, not everyone in our society shares these assumptions. As many of you know by now, some of you from first hand experience, there is a vocal group of public school critics doing its very best to drive a wedge between schools and parents. These people are doing their best to frighten parents out of their wits. "Inspired"—if that's the word—by leaders like Phyllis Schlafly, these extremists portray our nation's classrooms as modern day Sodom and Gomorrahs where students are schooled in sex and instructed on how to write suicide notes.

These critics want, in the end, to discredit public education by isolating teachers and school employees from parents and their communities. With this and any other group, we need to make ourselves perfectly clear: We will not be isolated. We will reach out to parents; we will reach out to communities; we will counter fear and ignorance with patience and understanding.

But let us understand one very important point: All of the outreach in the world won't help us unless you and I stand tall and speak out for our convictions. We must never allow the forces of reaction to make us back down from our basic values as socially conscious citizens and as NEA members. I pledge to you today that your officers will not back down.

We will never back down from our commitment to a free, meaningful public education for every child in this country. We will never back down from our commitment to the values of a pluralistic society—a society that respects and tolerates the differences among us. We will never back down from our commitment to democracy, the Bill of Rights, and the right of all Americans—including public school employees—to speak out and to participate in political life. We will never back down from our commitment to equal treatment and equal opportunity for every single American.

There is so much that needs to be done; we need to refashion our schools to meet the needs and the challenges that tomorrow will bring. We need to make our schools centers of lifelong learning. . . . We need to make mastery of subject matter the yardstick of educational excellence. . . . We need to give local school faculties the teaching freedom now so often abrigated by centralized school bureaucracies. . . . We need to guarantee all children an education that helps them thrive in the emerging new information age which is all around us.

Teachers and parents, school employees, and communities—together we can make a difference if we extend our vision, if we link ourselves to ever-widening networks of concerned educators, concerned parents, concerned school board members, and concerned legislators

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

National Education Association
Human and Civil Rights
1201 16th Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20036